

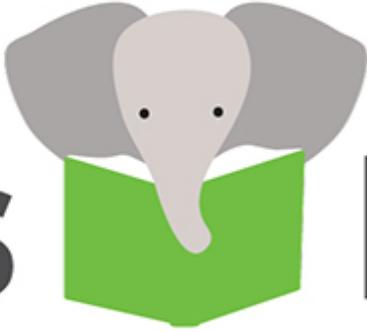


Three Gifts

One house is always filled with food, the other is full of gold, and the last one is filled with books. In your opinion, which house is the best among the three houses?



Three Gifts
Wong Chew Wee



Let's Read



The Asia Foundation



Once upon a time, in a land far far away, there lived a wise man with magical powers. He lived with his three daughters in a house by a stream. Nobody knew about his powers, not even his daughters. One day, the old man called his daughters to his side and said, "My dear daughters, I am getting old. One day, I will die. Before I die, I want to give each of you a special gift. The special gift will help you in your life, but you must know how to make good use of it." "I have three special houses. One is full of rice, and no matter how much you eat, the house will always be filled with rice." "The second house is a house full of gold. No matter how much you spend, you will never run out of gold." "The last one is full of books, and no matter how much you read, there will always be new books for you."



"Give me the house of rice!" said the eldest daughter, "so that I will never ever be hungry!" "Give me the house of gold!" said the second daughter, "so that I can buy all the beautiful clothes and jewelry." The old man turned to his youngest and favourite daughter. "I have only the house of books left, my dear, but you will find that it is the best gift of them all." "Dear father, you are the wise one. I will take what you have for me because it is a special gift from you." Soon after, the old man passed away.



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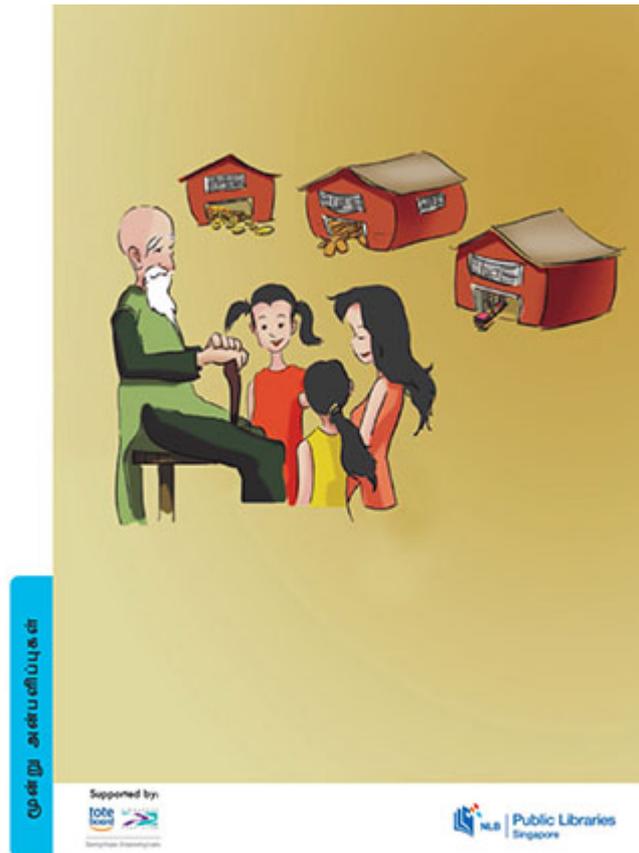
The eldest daughter lived in her house of rice. She never worked a day because she did not need any money to buy food. She ate and she ate, and she grew and she grew until she got so big that she could not get out of the house!



The second daughter lived in her house of gold. She too never worked a day since she could buy all the things she needed with the gold. Her things grew and grew until there was no space for her to move around anymore!



The youngest daughter read every day. She learned something new each day and her knowledge grew and grew! She was able to do many things for the people, and earned enough money to buy the food and things she needed. In fact, she didn't need to buy many things because she learnt to cook and made things with her hands. News of her wisdom and ability spread, and people came from all over the land to seek her advice and help, including her sisters. She was more than happy to help, as the more she read to help the people, the wiser she became.



Soon a village sprouted around the house of books. People came to learn from her and to read her books. She welcomed the villagers to her house, taught them to read and gave them books. Each time she gave away a book, a new one would appear. Soon the villagers called her "the wise one". On the day she received the honour from the villagers, she thought of her father. "Father, I know you gave me the best of the best." If you stumble upon the house today, you would probably see her still reading and learning - in the house of books.

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Let's Read is an initiative of The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program that fosters young readers in Asia and the Pacific.

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